

TOWN OF STOW, MASSACHUSETTS



DRAFT MASTER PLAN UPDATE February 28, 2008

The Master Plan for Stow - 2008

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SECTION 1

VISION FOR STOW

This vision expresses what Stow wants to become and is the foundation for all planning decisions and actions to help shape the community's future.

1.1 Values

When the question, “What do you value most about Stow?” is asked of a Stow resident, the most frequent answer is, “A sense of community consistent with its rural character.” Our many *open spaces* and historic village settings contribute to Stow's rural character. Conservation lands, farms, orchards, and golf courses are the resources of Stow that provide and preserve this rural character. We value our *villages* for their rich colonial and Victorian heritage and for the services they provide. We value those qualities that make Stow a wonderful place to live and raise a family. A strong sense of *community*, including involvement in our schools, churches, recreation, and social organizations and programs, provides opportunities for our children to excel and for adults to feel part of a supportive community.

1.2 Elements of the Vision

- 1.2.1 **Open Space** – Residential development is inevitable but should be done in a manner to preserve other land use options for our *open space*. Our current Zoning Bylaw limits growth, but it also forces development to consume large amounts of open space.

It is possible to direct development away from the *open space* parcels we wish to preserve by implementing smart growth principles. These principles recommend that you concentrate growth where development already exists. In Stow, that means in our villages, present and planned.

- 1.2.2 **The Villages** - We envision four different villages: *Lower Village* is our commercial center with shopping, banking, and convenient high-density residences for seniors. *Gleasondale* is our Victorian-period residential and work center with its historic mill and potential artisan industry. The *Town Center* is our colonial-period civic center with Town buildings, library, schools, monuments, and churches. *West Village*, still unborn, is an opportunity to apply smart growth principles (*see Appendix E*). With focused investment in our villages, we have an opportunity to develop four distinctly different and vibrant places to live and work.

- 1.2.3 **Community** – Stow is far more than a collection of well-maintained houses where people sleep. Churches, civic institutions, governmental bodies, and volunteer organizations give Stow residents many different venues in which to get to know and appreciate their fellow citizens. Furthermore, that sense of community is aided by the fact that Stow has a rich mix of people of all ages from different economic strata. This allows a broad mix of people to engage in organizations such as the Garden Club, the volunteer fire department, and local Scouting. Stow should create additional institutions that foster community involvement and community spirit. Careful planning will allow

us to build upon our existing **community**. The Vision for Stow is one of diversity for all citizens: a Town embracing diversity in housing, in land use, in economics and in lifestyles.

- 1.2.4 **Housing** – Stow can be labeled as a largely residential community but with a distinct country character provided by numerous orchards, golf courses, forests, wetlands, and areas of open space. As a relatively old community (incorporated in 1683), Stow has a variety of housing stock, including historical dwellings, a few farms and farmhouses, typical New England single and multiple family dwellings, and limited affordable and elderly housing communities. However, the current mix of housing stock is overwhelmingly single-family detached homes (91% of all housing units) on moderate-to large-sized lots. Furthermore, like much of eastern Massachusetts, the cost of these homes has escalated dramatically with the result that these homes are not available to first-time buyers or those with a limited income. Our vision is to re-establish diversity in our community by creating diversity in our housing stock where young, middle age, and older residents of all income levels can come together and share the common values that existed in this community many years ago.

1.3 Implementing the Vision

How will we achieve our Vision? Nothing is inevitable. The Stow we love is made by the large and small decisions we make at Town Meeting. The purpose of the Master Plan is to define those things that will maintain the character of Stow as a pleasant, multi-generational Town. We propose 57 individual actions in this report. We summarize our priority A and B recommendations here.

1.3.1 Open Space

- Complete the Assabet Rail Trail through Stow
- Proactively negotiate to purchase Crow Island for conservation and recreational purposes
- Address the issue of eutrophication in Lake Boon
- Encourage Low Impact Development by implementing the principles of smart growth
- Develop a process for addressing properties that are withdrawn from Chapter 61
- Secure easements to complete the “Emerald Necklace” walking trail network

1.3.2 The Villages

Specific plans are offered for each individual village, highlighting the unique aspects of each village. The following recommendations apply to all villages:

- Enact mixed-use village overlay districts. These will allow redevelopment and new development that promotes diverse housing stock, revitalizes existing village commerce, encourages pedestrian use, reduces roadway congestion, and promotes a sense of community.
- Assist in the creation of common water and sewage facilities for the villages.
- Provide traffic and parking facilities that allow safe and convenient use of villages.
- Enact a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) bylaw to protect open space and allow denser development in villages.

1.3.3 Community

- Solve our school building needs in a unified school complex near the center of Stow
- Create a Community Center to meet the needs of the entire community – elders, children, and adults
- Hire a Community Development Director to coordinate planning efforts and implement municipal projects as they arise
- Hire an Information Technology professional to address the Town’s computer, software, and communication needs
- Address the land needs revealed by the Municipal Land Use Survey
- Target parcels contiguous to existing town properties to expand their potential uses.
- Seek out large parcels of land for recreational facilities

1.3.4 Housing

- Establish a comprehensive housing policy for Stow
- Hire a Community Development Director to deal with housing issues
- Create a plan that effectively uses the combined resources of Community Preservation Act funds and Stow Housing Trust funds for increasing our affordable housing
- Identify parcels suitable for mixed-use development or dwellings suitable for preservation as affordable units
- Enact zoning changes to encourage the building of diversified housing stock

SECTION 2

INTRODUCTION

The following sections in this plan discuss how we can fulfill our shared vision and focus on:

- Open space
- The villages
- Community
- Housing

Each section reviews the elements that are currently in place and makes recommendations for future action. Each recommendation is prioritized as:

A = High

B = Medium

C = Low

The recommendations also indentify the organizations that we see as responsible for implementation. Tools or vehicles for implementing recommendations are also included along with answers to frequently asked questions.

SECTION 3

OPEN SPACE

3.1. Supporting Elements Currently in Place – It is a tribute to those who went before us that the Town of Stow has placed value on open space. The result is that we have many assets from which to build as well as many supporting regulations to help us with that building. (*See the Town of Stow website at www.stow-ma.gov.*) Our open space assets include: Lake Boon, the Delaney Project, our conservation lands, Minuteman Air Field, as well as numerous farms, orchards, golf courses, and cemeteries.

3.1.1 Chapter 61 - We are fortunate that many of our residents who own large parcels take advantage of Massachusetts General Law Chapter 61 programs. Chapter 61 is a valuable tool for property owners, who benefit from a reduction in taxes, providing financial assistance to preserve their land. Chapter 61 also benefits the Town: residents can enjoy open space vistas that contribute to Stow’s rural character, which we strive to preserve. (*See Appendix B and C.*)

Although Chapter 61 is a valuable tool, the Town loses its open space benefits when an owner decides to change the use of a parcel to one that is not permitted under Chapter 61. Although the Town is given the “right of first refusal” for a parcel that undergoes such a change in use, the price of the land is usually prohibitive, and the time to make the decision (120 days) is short. Because a new proposed use typically makes the land more valuable than the uses permitted under Chapter 61, there is usually a very significant difference between the assessed value and the appraised or offered value of the property. When removing a parcel from Chapter 61, the owner only needs to pay taxes for the past five years on the assessed value of the property, less any reduced taxes paid during that period.

Chapter 61 was amended, effective March 22, 2007, to make the three Chapter 61 programs (forest, farm, recreation) more uniform and to address issues regarding rollback taxes. Additionally, the modifications extended the amount of time municipalities have to match a bona fide offer that a landowner has from a developer for a parcel that leaves the program.

However, even with these changes, we believe that Chapter 61 has limitations that prevent the Town from responding effectively to its right of first refusal. For example, the Town still only has 120 days to decide whether to purchase a parcel or assign its right of first refusal to another organization.

3.1.2 Financial Resources - Another element in place is the variety of financial resources that we have for acquiring land, easements or deed (conservation) restrictions on key open space parcels, as noted in the Open Space and Recreation Plan. These resources include:

- Community Preservation Act Funds dedicated for open space and recreation

- Public/private partnerships with non-profit conservation groups: Stow Conservation Trust (SCT), OAR (Organization for the Assabet River), and SVT (Sudbury Valley Trustees), all who have contributed greatly toward the preservation of open space in Stow
- Although limited, the Conservation Commission Conservation Fund

3.1.3 Bylaws and Regulations - Bylaws and regulations are also in place to protect valuable, open space resources. The following bylaws and regulations can be found on the Town's website:

- Zoning Bylaw
- Wetlands Bylaws
- Planning Board Rules and Regulations
- Health Regulations

Because the Town does not manage a public water supply or sewage system for residences, our zoning promotes urban sprawl. Our Board of Health and Zoning Bylaw require a minimum of 1 ½ acres to support an individual well and septic system. Without a very large investment in a public water supply and sewage system, urban sprawl will remain a problem. A partial solution may occur when the cost of smaller sewage treatment systems becomes more reasonable, and small developments can be required to install one of these systems, thus permitting a more dense development.

3.2 Recommended Actions – We recommend a number of specific actions to be taken over the next five years. In addition, we recommend a number of specific initiatives be put in place to support these actions and to act as a springboard for the steps needed in the future.

3.2.1 Education - (Priority C)

Education is important as we deal with issues of open space. Education includes seminars and programs within our community to improve the awareness and understanding of natural resource issues. Education will result in the commitment of our leadership either through enlightenment or through the expressed will of the voters. *Responsibility: Conservation Commission (lead), Planning Board, Stow Conservation Trust, OAR, SVT*

3.2.2 Emerald Necklace – (Priority C)

In the next five years, we need to continue work towards completing the Emerald Necklace walking trail of conservation land throughout the Town of Stow. *(See the map in Appendix H.)*

Responsibility: Stow Conservation Trust (lead), Conservation Commission, Open Space Committee, Board of Selectmen, Planning Board

3.2.2.1 Easements – (Priority B)

We must identify and work to secure and protect easements over missing links in the Emerald Necklace network. Where appropriate, specifics are described in the Open Space and Recreation Plan (on file in the office of the Conservation Commission).

Responsibility: Stow Conservation Trust (lead), Conservation Commission, Open Space Committee, Board of Selectmen, Planning Board

3.2.3 **Rail Trail** – (Priority A)

The Assabet River Rail Trail, once a vision, is now a reality in adjoining communities. Stow is the missing link. We need to identify the financial issues, the concerns of current landowners, and the possibilities for action to complete the rail trail in Stow and connect the pieces in our neighboring towns. We must make proposals that alleviate concerns and explore all options, including incentives for property owners, so as to make this opportunity a reality in Stow. (*See Appendix I for a map of the rail trail.*)

Responsibility: Assabet River Rail Trail Committee (lead), Board of Selectmen, Recreation Commission

3.2.4 **Crow Island** – (Priority A)

The privately owned Crow Island presents attractive options for the Town as a recreational parcel for ball fields, a day camp, and general access to the Assabet River, and as a link to the Rail Trail, national wildlife preserve, and Stow's Emerald Necklace. We need to identify the issues and opportunities in acquiring Crow Island. We should be proactive in negotiating the purchase of Crow Island for conservation and recreational purposes. (*See Appendix L for a map of Crow Island.*)

Responsibility: Board of Selectmen (lead), Recreation Commission, Open Space Committee, Community Preservation Committee, Stow Conservation Trust

3.2.5 **Lake Boon** – (Priority A)

It is an ecological fact that Lake Boon is eutrophying. The rate of decay and prognosis is debatable. If we, as a Town, merely wait for this inevitability, we will severely restrict our options at that time. Many in Town feel that we must make every effort to protect this asset, and support for this directive must be tested. We must scope out what recovery means along with the cost of recovery. Then, a thoughtful implementation of a Betterment Fee will provide resources for the eventuality. The Lake Boon Association should be mobilized on this issue. (*See Appendix J for a map of Lake Boon.*)

3.2.5.1 **Weeds** - For years now, it has been recognized that the weed problem in Lake Boon has not improved despite attempts to stop the spread. The basins are becoming filled with vegetative growth. The density of population around the lake both in Stow and in Hudson is overwhelming the land and its ability to keep the lake environment both clean and safe for use. The prognosis for this area is poor, and efforts need to be taken now to prevent further degradation. We need to investigate options and their costs, and then we need to institute a betterment program in the near future.

3.2.5.2 **Fertilizers** – We need to educate the residents of lake properties that using fertilizer on their lawns feeds the weeds and perpetuates their spread. The use of fertilizers must be prohibited near the lake, whether through a buffer zone or outright prohibition. Non-point source pollution is one of the biggest offenders in the lake pollution.

3.2.5.3 **Septic Failures** - Existing cesspools and failing septic systems exacerbate the weed problem. Before 1940, Lake Boon was a summer colony with small cottages and

cesspools that had two months of use. For the rest of the year, the lake area “rested.” Today large houses on small lots have replaced many of the small cottages, and septic systems on these lots are being stressed from heavy usage. Some failed systems have been replaced, but providing “maximum feasible upgrades” only postpones the inevitable. In the future, lake residents will saturate the ground and its water sources with waste that has nowhere else to go.

Town officials and residents must work together to create a plan to save this valuable resource for future generations. Years ago, the Selectmen sponsored an engineering study to explore alternatives to sewers for lake residences. The study proposed a three-phase implementation that included the Hudson side of Lake Boon in the third phase. The study was never implemented because the residents of Lake Boon didn’t support it. Meanwhile, aging and failed septic systems continue to adversely affect the lake.

We need to revisit the study, and political leaders and Lake Boon organizations should consider viable alternatives to the current sewage systems and build a political consensus to support them. Lake Boon residents will need to cover the majority of the costs of the project. Already Lake Boon residents have been paying large fees to replace septic systems that have failed. A common solution, while expensive, will not be as onerous as the cost to replace individual systems. The Town should participate financially: With the Town Beach and recreation fields, other residents have a stake in the preservation of Lake Boon as an attractive resource.

Responsibility: Board of Selectmen (lead), Board of Health, Lake Boon Commission, Lake Boon Association, Conservation Commission

3.2.6 **Encourage Low Impact Development - (Priority A)**

As part of the development process, we need to continue to promote Low Impact Development (LID) techniques in our Zoning Bylaw, Planning Board Rules and Regulations, and negotiations with developers. LID is an environmentally sensitive approach to developing land and managing storm water runoff. With LID, development uses the natural terrain as much as possible and manages rain water at its source. Examples include swales and rain gardens, pervious pavement, wildlife corridors, and multi-purpose landscaping and vegetation.

LID is a smart growth tool and is an ecosystem-based approach. It allows for greater development potential with less environmental impacts through the use of smarter designs and advanced technologies that achieve a better balance between conservation, growth, and ecosystem protection, and public health and quality of life. (*See the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs website for more information on Low Impact Development.*)

Responsibility: Planning Board (lead), Board of Health, Conservation Commission

3.2.7 **Encourage Agricultural Based Businesses - (Priority C)**

Early businesses within Stow were all resource based: agriculture. We must encourage and support the small farms, orchards, and golf courses that embody our agricultural heritage today, along with their supporting businesses, such as farm stands and bed and breakfast establishments.

The December 2005 Special Town Meeting created the Stow Agricultural Commission to help preserve the rural character of Stow through the preservation and promotion of agriculture. The Commission will help keep Stow farms viable by promoting agriculture through educational literature, events, and articles. The Commission can act as a voice for agriculture in Town government, helping to ensure that the various boards understand the impact of their actions on agriculture.

We encourage the creation of a Town committee—perhaps the newly created Agricultural Commission working in cooperation with the Stow Conservation Trust—to focus on promoting Stow’s “green” tourism potential, including the promotion of local products. For example, we can realize much potential in marketing “Stow apples” as a recognized “brand” in Massachusetts and New England markets.

Responsibility: Agricultural Commission (lead), Board of Selectmen

3.2.8 **Chapter 61 Changes - (Priority A)**

Four point eight percent (4.8%) of Stow’s land is enrolled in Chapter 61 (Forestry), 61A (Agriculture) and 61B (Recreation) programs. *(A listing of properties can be found in Appendix B)* We should develop a formal procedure for processing notices of withdrawal for sale or the change of use of lands enrolled in these Chapter 61 programs to ensure that such parcels are given due consideration for municipal needs.

As stated in Section 3.1.1, recent changes (provided by Chapter 394 of the Acts of 2006 and effective as of March 2, 2006) have clarified the existing law and addressed some problems but did not address other issues. The Town should work with our state representatives to proactively seek changes that extend the time period for the Town’s due diligence from 120 days to 9 months and that adopt a more equitable compensation to the Town when rollback taxes are calculated. Rollback taxes should be based on the current appraised or offered value for the property, considering its new use, and apply to any change in use, which may occur in the succeeding ten-year period from the time the property is removed from Chapter 61 tax protection.

Responsibility: Board of Selectmen (lead)

SECTION 4

THE VILLAGES

4.1 The Villages - Stow's villages are gems that need to be polished, maintained, preserved, and enhanced. With focused investment in our villages, we can develop four distinctly different and vibrant places to live and work. This section highlights their uniquely different characters and vision for each, and it makes recommendations for each.

4.2 Common Recommended Actions - Specific actions are identified for each village; however, the following recommendations apply to all of our villages.

4.2.1 Mixed-Use Village Overlay Districts – (Priority A)

To achieve a well-planned mixed-use village, Stow should consider adopting village overlay districts to allow development and redevelopment that is designed to:

- Encourage diversity in the Town's housing stock
- Provide design guidelines to promote village style redevelopment with a mixture of uses
- Encourage revitalization of existing commercial uses and historic buildings
- Provide a focal point for pedestrian-related uses
- Reduce roadway congestion
- Promote a greater sense of community

Responsibility: Planning Board (lead), Board of Health

4.2.2 Transfer of Development Rights – (Priority B)

Adopting a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Zoning Bylaw will concentrate development in appropriate areas that already have infrastructure and will reduce development in areas that are a high priority for conservation, as identified in the Open Space and Recreation Plan. (*See Appendix D for more information on TDR.*) TDR is not a new concept, and a proposed bylaw has been presented within the Town of Stow. Basically, landowners sell their rights to build to someone who will exercise those rights with a density bonus within defined receiving areas. The result is protected open space, revitalized villages and pedestrian friendly living patterns.

We support the concept of Transfer of Development Rights for our Town but recognize there may be some concessions for increasing build out. A modified version of Transfer of Development Rights may be possible; specifically, to create a fund for subsequent purchase of open space as it becomes available. The fund would be seeded by fees assessed to allow development of otherwise restricted properties within the villages. This is a tool with great conceptual potential. However, putting TDR into practice elsewhere has been difficult with only limited success. Thus, its priority is based on practical experience rather than conceptual benefit.

Responsibility: Planning Board (lead), Conservation Commission, Stow Conservation Trust

4.2.3 **Water and Sewer - (Priority A)**

The growth potential for the Lower Village and Gleasondale Village is stymied by the fact that almost all of the lots are non-conforming and depend upon private wells and septic systems. To allow for additional compact village development and foster the revitalization of the historic mill in Gleasondale and commercial buildings in the Lower Village, the Town must consider the creation of a water and sewer district and the construction of a tertiary treatment plant that will have the capacity to accommodate both existing development and new infill development.

Responsibility: Board of Selectmen (lead), Board of Health, Planning Board

4.2.4 **Traffic, Parking, and Mobility – (Priority A)**

Land use changes, as outlined in the proposed village overlay districts, must provide for a transportation network that is safe and convenient for pedestrian and vehicular traffic, preserves and enhances Stow's quality of life, and encourages a sense of community. The Town needs a vision for transportation, encompassing pedestrian and vehicular traffic, to provide guidance on future development proposals.

Responsibility: Planning Board (lead), Board of Selectmen, Highway Department

4.2.5 **Demolition Delay Bylaw - (Priority C)**

As stated in the 1996 Master Plan, residents clearly want to preserve historic buildings and sites; however, they do not want the additional level of regulation that goes with historic districts. We should consider a Demolition Delay bylaw as an alternative measure for historic preservation.

The purpose of a Demolition Delay bylaw is to postpone demolition for a specified period of time to allow interested parties to evaluate all alternatives to the demolition of a structure.

Responsibility: Planning Board (lead), Historic Commission

4.3 **Lower Village** - The Lower Village is our commercial center with shopping, banking, the Post Office, and convenient high-density residences for seniors. The vision is to: encourage revitalization of the commercial center; increase the Town's stock of affordable housing; promote village style redevelopment; enhance the Lower Village's unique identity and development potential as a focal point for pedestrian-related uses; reduce roadway congestion; and promote a greater sense of community.

4.3.1 **Supporting Elements Currently in Place** – Each of Stow's villages grew around some activity. The Lower Village featured a village green, a tavern, a blacksmith shop, a cemetery, a resting place for overnight guests en route to or from Boston, and many residential homes.

4.3.1.1 **Character** – The Lower Village, once typical of small villages in New England, became the business center of Stow in the eighteenth century when Stow Center converted into a civic and educational center and moved its leatherwork, tailor, and blacksmith shops to the Lower Village. Traces of the historical village are still evident, but they are steadily disappearing.

Stow is fortunate in that it has many volunteers dedicated to the enhancement of Stow's historic Lower Village. Working with The Cecil Group of Boston and the Lower Village Sub-Committee, the Planning Board identified a list of issues and proposed solutions, including a lack of identity, pedestrian and vehicular safety, zoning constraints, and inadequate water supply and distribution. The Lower Village Sub-Committee adopted a vision statement:

“A Vision for the Future - Our goal is to create an identity for our historic Lower Village, consistent with the rural character of Stow. By addressing visual, functional and safety issues through a public-private partnership, we seek to enhance the Lower Village as the vital business center of our community.”

A village green is important to the overall appearance of a New England village. One of the Lower Village Sub-Committee's goals is to restore the beauty of the Lower Village Common with the potential to expand the common and create a visual link to the Lower Village Cemetery. Much of this goal could be achieved at minimal cost.

- 4.3.1.2 **Historic Homes** - Many substantial houses were built in the early 1800s. Stow residents have indicated that they recognize the value of their historic buildings, which are fundamental to Stow's identity. The survival of these historic resources today is neither accidental nor a guarantee for their future. Stow lost a 1775 Federal-style dwelling, located at 194 Great Road, adjacent to the current Stow House of Pizza.

When the U.S. Post Office relocated to the Lower Village, there was an attempt to save an 1875 Greek Revival dwelling, which was temporarily relocated to the same lot. Unfortunately, due to zoning restrictions, the owner was unable to find an economically feasible use. In 2003, the house was demolished.

An 1859 Italianate-style house, known as the “Faxon House” and located at 189 Great Road, is located on a site that has been developed as a senior living development. The Planning Board, in its permitting process, successfully negotiated a plan that preserved the Faxon House as part of the design of the development. This was an excellent example of collaboration, which preserved an historic property with development and redevelopment.

- 4.3.1.3 **Hazardous Waste Sites** - Contamination of groundwater from hazardous waste has occurred in numerous locations throughout the Town and within the Lower Village area. Several of these areas are listed as 21E sites and are subject to clean up under the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). DEP has determined that these sites need remediation to rectify the damage to the groundwater; the contamination has been analyzed, and remediation efforts have commenced. However, once groundwater is contaminated, it usually takes decades to clean the supply.
- 4.3.1.4 **Water and Sewer** - Public water and sewer would provide property owners the incentive and the Town the ability to promote redevelopment of Lower Village while addressing the hazardous waste sites. One of the two major aquifers in Town is located

on the Kunelius Property, off of Red Acre Road, and it could function as a public water supply.

DEP is now investigating properties in the Lower Village to determine compliance with current regulations. The Stow Shopping Center site is under DEP orders to replace its wastewater treatment systems, and Meeting House at Stow is under orders to repair its wastewater treatment system. DEP is also in discussion with owners of property on the south side of Route 117 concerning non-compliance issues for drinking water. Meeting House at Stow is currently the only business property in the Lower Village with a public water supply that meets current DEP standards.

With the support of the Planning Board's Lower Village Sub-Committee, the Assabet Water Company conducted a feasibility study for developing a privately funded, owned and operated public water supply. They investigated three operations:

- 1) Develop a larger and more comprehensive groundwater supply system in Stow
- 2) Connect to the Town of Maynard's water or sewage system
- 3) Connect to the Town of Acton's water system for service

They determined that an extension from the Maynard Water Supply system was the most certain and cost-effective path to pursue. The Town of Maynard did not support this recommendation.

The Town of Stow, acting as a facilitator under the direction of the Town Administrator, is investigating an alternative public water supply for the Lower Village property owners, one that would be privately owned and operated.

- 4.3.1.5 **Transportation** - Development and the subsequent increase in vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian traffic have led to increased concerns for pedestrian safety. Route 117 plays a vital role for both regional and local traffic and is considered to be our most serious congestion problem. Studies show that Route 117 is frequently at capacity during peak hours from Pompositticut Street through Hudson Road and at the intersections of Route 117 with Red Acre Road and Pompositticut Street. By 2015, the AM and PM peak hour volumes are expected to be approximately 18-20% higher than those measured in 2005. (*See the Stow website for the traffic study.*)

The Planning Board successfully received funding at the 2005 Annual Town Meeting for a traffic planning study and design services. This study was to identify and define potential improvements to vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle transportation conflicts. It was to recommend solutions and suggested actions that are in harmony with the Town's goal to enhance the Lower Village as the vital business center of our community.

- 4.3.1.6 **Housing and Economic Development** - As stated in Section 6, Housing, Stow has a limited number of low-cost and moderate-cost single-family homes and rental units. The few deed-restricted homes in the Lower Village (located on Elm Ridge Road) represent a very small contribution toward achieving our affordable housing goals.

The two largest properties in Lower Village—the Stow Shopping Center and the 6+ acre parcel known as the “Erkkinen” property—have recently changed ownership. Neither of these properties was developed in a manner consistent with the character of a historic New England village. Additionally, the Erkkinen property has a mixture of pre-existing non-conforming uses. We expect that these properties will be redeveloped over the next few years. To encourage redevelopment, the Planning Board sponsored a zoning map amendment to address the split zoning for the Erkkinen parcel, changing the limited residential district to business. However, we cannot assume that this parcel will be occupied by "village-scale" businesses even with this zoning change.

Therefore, the Planning Board is drafting proposed bylaws for mixed-use village overlay districts, which capture the scale and character of traditional New England villages and allow development and redevelopment that differ from conventional zoning regulations. The Lower Village is a prime candidate for a mixed-use overlay district. The drafted bylaw intends to promote a range of compatible land uses, including various types of single-family and multi-family dwellings; commercial, industrial and office uses that focus on serving the needs of our community; and common, public open space.

4.3.2 Lower Village Recommended Actions - We recommend a number of specific actions and supporting initiatives to be taken over the next five years for the Lower Village.

4.3.2.1 Establish Lower Village Mixed-Use Overlay District – (Priority A)

We envision development and redevelopment of Lower Village in a manner consistent with a traditional livable and walkable New England village and recommend the adoption of a new Lower Village Mixed-Use Overlay District. *(See Appendix N for the proposed overlay district map and the Stow website for the proposed Lower Village Overlay District bylaw.)*

A mixed-use overlay district for the Lower Village will allow development and redevelopment that supports a pedestrian friendly range of compatible uses, including smaller-scale housing and commercial services. The overlay district should encourage:

- Existing business parcels to be more retail oriented, allowing up to 100% retail/office use, and no more than 20% residential use
- A transition zone that allows a mix of uses while maintaining the character of existing historic structures, allowing up to 100% residential use, and no more than 20% retail/office use.
- A mix of residential and non-residential uses
- "Village-scale" businesses
- Setbacks that keep businesses and residences close to the street
- New development and redevelopment that is in harmony with a traditional New England Village
- The preservation of existing historic structures
- Diversified housing
- The conversion and/or building of infill housing with an emphasis on affordable housing

Responsibility: Planning Board (lead), Board of Health, Housing Partnership

4.3.2.2 **Traffic Study – (Priority A)**

We should establish a committee to implement Planning Board recommendations based on the Traffic Planning Study that was completed as a result of the May 2005 Annual Town Meeting. *(See the Stow website for the traffic study.)*

Responsibility: Planning Board (lead), Highway Department, Board of Selectmen

4.3.2.3 **Water and Sewer Feasibility Study – (Priority A)**

We should establish a committee to conduct a feasibility study for providing a public water and a sewage system for the Lower Village. *(See Section 4.2.3 of the Village Introduction.)*

Responsibility: Board of Selectmen (lead), Board of Health

4.3.2.4 **Lower Village Improvement Plan – (Priority A)**

We should implement the Lower Village Sub-Committee's improvement plan as a top priority:

- Improve the Lower Village Common to create a visual link from the common to the cemetery. Use the existing green area as a focal point for events, such as a farmers' market or art exhibits
- Actively engage landowners and business owners in discussions to promote redevelopment that includes mixed-use residential and retail
- Actively seek out specific businesses, such as restaurants, pubs and Internet cafés
- Reclaim the Town land on the Route 117 side of the Shoemaker house
- Encourage landscape improvements to the Stow Shopping Center
- Realign Shopping Center curb cuts

Responsibility: Planning Board, Property Owners

4.4 Gleasondale - Gleasondale is both a residential and work center with its historic mill and growing artisan industry, waterways, rail bed, and Victorian influence. Our vision is to: encourage restoration of the mill building as an anchor for a village rich in tradition; promote village style redevelopment and re-establish Gleasondale as a neighborhood commercial center where people want to work, shop, and reside, and visitors can access its recreational, historic, and commercial features; increase the Town's stock of affordable housing; and promote a greater sense of the Gleasondale community throughout the Town.

4.4.1 Supporting Elements Currently in Place – Gleasondale, originally known as Rock Bottom, grew around its mill industries. It featured saw mills, grist mills, a woolen mill, a post office, a general store and housing for the mill workers.

4.4.1.1 Character - Gleasondale, once typical of a small mill village in New England, was the manufacturing center of Stow, due to its proximity to the Assabet River. It is now primarily residential, but the character of the village is still defined by the mill and its surrounding houses. The residential buildings in Gleasondale are diverse and include single-family homes, single-family homes with accessory or "in-law" apartments, duplexes, three and four-family dwellings and small apartment buildings. Most of

these buildings were constructed on small lots prior to 1930, and some were built as early as the 1700s. From the street, it appears that Gleasondale is built out. However, several acres of prime real estate are undeveloped, particularly two large parcels. The property owners have the right to develop these parcels in compliance with our Zoning Bylaw.

4.4.1.2 Historic Buildings - In 1849, the present brick mill, constructed when the original wooden structure burned, was built in the Greek Revival style. From the mid-1800s to the end of World War II, the Gleasondale Mill housed the fourth oldest woolen mill in the United States. At the end of World War II, the mill was converted to burlap manufacturing, and in 1966, it was converted to its present use as the Gleasondale Industrial Park. In the 1800s, houses for workers were built near the Gleasondale Mill, and many of these houses still exist along Gleasondale Road. The predominant architectural style of the village is Federal, but there are fine examples of colonial, Greek Revival, Victorian and Italianate architecture within the village.

4.4.1.3 Hazardous Waste Sites - The Gleasondale Mill has contaminated groundwater from hazardous waste. It is listed as a 21E site and is subject to cleanup under the DEP before it can be developed. DEP has determined that this site will need remediation to rectify the damage to the groundwater. The contamination has been analyzed, and remediation efforts have commenced. However, once groundwater is contaminated, it usually takes decades to clean the supply. The site is eligible as a Brownfields Reclamation Project with potential funding from the State.

4.4.1.4 Water and Sewer - The growth potential for Gleasondale is stymied by the fact that almost all of the lots are non-conforming and have both wells and septic systems on them. To revitalize the historic mill and support additional compact village development, we should seriously consider creating a sewer district and construct a tertiary treatment plant with the capacity to accommodate existing development, revitalization of the historic mill, and new infill development.

A treatment plant could be located on several parcels. In addition, the Town owns a well site in Gleasondale that could be a public water supply.

Another alternative that we should seriously consider is a connection with the Town of Hudson public sewer system and/or their public water supply. We should explore an arrangement that is beneficial to both Hudson and Stow.

A public water supply is another alternative that should be studied. There is a parcel that contains a high-yield water supply with sufficient yield to share/sell with Hudson.

4.4.1.5 Housing and Economic Development - As stated in Section 6, Housing, Stow has a limited number of low-cost and moderate-cost single-family homes and rental units. The few rental units in Gleasondale represent a very small contribution toward achieving Stow's housing goals.

- 4.4.1.6 **Potential Buildout** – A survey of the parcels in the proposed Gleasondale Village District revealed that 94% of the lots have less frontage and area than is required by our Zoning Bylaw. Only 23 lots meet our minimum lot requirements. The Gleasondale village could be expanded by 14 lots of 1.5 acres with 200 feet of frontage. This would dramatically alter the visual appearance and character of Gleasondale, which has a median lot size of .41 acres and a median lot frontage of 105'. When the residentially zoned Gleason-Perkins land and the industrially zoned Perkins-McCassey farmland, pasture and woodland are developed and the adjacent golf courses and apple orchards become house lots, it will become difficult to distinguish Gleasondale village from the surrounding community. The village may no longer be an identifiable entity, and its lengthy history could be lost. The following table shows the build-out potential of Gleasondale under our current zoning:

Acres	Existing Dwelling Units	Additional Dwelling Units	Existing Industrial Floor Area	Additional Industrial Floor Area
162.66	71	103	91,920 sq. ft.	272,376

In Gleasondale, there is a significant amount of industrially zoned land. At present, 90 acres is enrolled in Chapter 61A and actively used as a horse farm. Converting the horse farm into an industrial development would result in an additional 235,710 square feet of industrial floor area. The Gleasondale Mill is located on two parcels that total almost 5 acres of land.

Under current zoning, the additional floor area of the Gleasondale Mill would be 34,070 square feet. Ideally, economic development in Stow's villages will occur among and be compatible with the existing historic structures and places. In Gleasondale, it would be appropriate to foster mixed-use redevelopment of the historic mill. The Gleasondale Mill could house the small incubator businesses that have been so important to Stow. It would also be appropriate to allow artists' studios in combination with an artist's dwelling or loft in the Gleasondale village.

Gleasondale is also a good candidate to be a mixed-use overlay district and would promote a range of compatible land uses, including various types of single-family and multi-family dwellings; commercial, industrial and office uses that focus on serving the needs of our community; and common, public open space that takes advantage of the Assabet River.

- 4.4.2 **Gleasondale Recommended Actions** – We recommend a number of specific actions and supporting initiatives be put in place for Gleasondale over the next five years.

- 4.4.2.1 **Establish Gleasondale Village Mixed-Use Overlay District - (Priority A)**
We envision development and redevelopment of the Gleasondale village in a manner consistent with a traditional livable and walkable New England village and recommend the adoption of a new Gleasondale Village Mixed-Use Overlay District. (*See Appendix O for the proposed overlay district map and the Stow website for a proposed bylaw.*)

A mixed-use overlay district for Gleasondale will also allow development and redevelopment that supports a pedestrian friendly range of compatible uses, including various types of single-family and multi-family dwellings and commercial services. The overlay district should encourage:

- Redevelopment of the mill for a combination of business, retail, and housing
- A transition zone that allows a mixture of uses while maintaining the character of existing historic structures (for example, an artist studio and individual artist dwellings and lofts)
- A mix of residential and non-residential uses
- "Village-scale" businesses
- Setbacks that keep businesses and residences close to the street
- New development and redevelopment that is in harmony with the present village character and environment
- Preservation of existing historic structures
- Diversified housing
- The conversion and/or building of infill housing with an emphasis on affordable housing

Responsibility: Planning Board (lead), Board of Health

4.4.2.2 **Water and Sewer Feasibility Studies - (Priority A)**

We should establish a committee to conduct a feasibility study to identify ways to provide public water and sewer in Gleasondale.

Responsibility: Board of Selectmen (lead), Board of Health

4.4.2.3 **Restore Gleasondale Mill - (Priority A)**

We should promote public-private partnerships to restore the beauty and functionality of the Gleasondale Mill.

Responsibility: Planning Board (lead), Property Owners

4.4.2.4 **Gleasondale Village Sub-Committee - (Priority A)**

We should establish a Gleasondale Village Sub-Committee, similar to the Lower Village Sub-Committee, to work with the Planning Board to:

- Establish a Gleasondale village improvement plan
- Actively engage landowners and business owners in discussions to promote redevelopment to include mixed-use residential and retail
- Actively seek out specific businesses, such as artist studios, coffee shops and cafes

Responsibility: Planning Board (lead)

4.5 **Town Center** – The Town Center is our colonial-period civic center with Town buildings, library, schools, monuments, churches, the Town Common, period residences, and proximity to Stow's schools. The Town Center is visibly identified with the colonial period and subsequent Greek Revival influence of Town. It is where we place historic markers and well maintained monuments. Our vision is to promote a clearly identified municipal and historic center, creating a center for learning and reflection. *(See Appendix K for a map of the Town Center.)*

- 4.5.1 **Supporting Elements Currently In Place** - In colonial times, the “town center” was where the residents gathered for shopping, meeting, going to church and the library. In this way, residents could access stores, offices for a lawyer and a doctor, a school building, a church, and maybe a library.

Our current Town Center is of colonial design, and it houses our historical Town Hall, our Town Building with municipal offices, our library, churches, police and fire departments and schools along with a small convenience store. The Town Center also features a prominent Town Common at the intersection of routes 117 and 62. It has a few valuable monuments and proximity to the Stow cemetery that is most used today. A mix of housing on small lots creates a small neighborhood that is pedestrian friendly, and sidewalks let people more easily access the services offered in this area. These elements, together with a scarcity of commercial enterprise, combine to convey a sense of old New England at the hub of the Town.

- 4.5.2 **Town Center Recommended Actions** – We recommend specific actions to preserve and enhance the Town Center’s character in the next five years.

4.5.2.1 **Zoning Changes** - (*Priority A*)

To maintain this small village feeling, we should change our Zoning Bylaw to allow the larger, older homes in our center to be converted into multi-family or common-wall units. This change allows our Town Center to have a denser population with diversity in housing choices, while retaining the facades of our historic buildings. We should encourage building design that is small and in scale with the rest of this village and is affordable.

Responsibility: Planning Board (lead), Board of Health

4.5.2.2 **Center of Education** - (*Priority A*)

We recommend keeping our schools centrally located, using the properties that we currently have in the most efficient manner possible. We should proactively seek to purchase properties near our schools for future expansion.

Responsibility: Board of Selectmen (lead), School Committee

4.5.2.3 **Water and Sewer** - (*Priority C*)

We should establish a public water supply for the schools and surrounding homes so that the smaller lots won’t have to provide both a sewage disposal system and a potable water supply. This proposal, as well as the wastewater treatment system proposal, requires creating a betterment district, allowing a homeowner to pay for public services fairly. We need to create a small wastewater treatment plant that will service the schools and some of the housing units around the schools. This creates an environmentally safe sewage disposal system in the center of Town.

Responsibility: Planning Board (lead), Board of Health

4.5.2.4 **Parking and Sidewalks** – (*Priority A*)

Sidewalks should be well maintained to encourage walking for a healthier lifestyle. We must also provide adequate parking for those who journey to the Town Center to use its many resources. (*See Section 4.2.4 of the Village Introduction.*)

Responsibility: Board of Selectmen (lead), Highway Department

4.6 West Stow Village

West Stow, in its early stages of becoming a village, is an opportunity to apply smart growth principles (*see Appendix E*). West Stow is a relatively underserved section of Town with a larger proportion of existing industry than other areas in Town. Our vision is to create a planned center of trade. West Stow also presents an opportunity to create a neighborhood with high-density housing and supporting recreational and retail elements, while avoiding clutter and congestion. (*See Appendix M for a map of West Stow.*)

4.6.1 Supporting Elements Currently in Place -West Stow is a major area currently under development. For the purposes of this Master Plan, West Stow is defined as all parcels south of Great Road, between Hudson Road and Maple Street, along with connecting roads.

West Stow consists of large areas of industrially and residentially zoned land, a small business zone and a small recreation-conservation zone. It also contains large areas of wetlands. Most of the residentially zoned land along Hudson Road, Maple Street and Great Road, as well as along smaller roads in the area, has been developed. Subdivisions that have been created within the last twenty years typically consist of fewer than ten homes. A number of large, undeveloped residential parcels are difficult to develop at this time because of access issues.

West Stow presently has two small business districts: one is located near the intersection of Hudson Road with Great Road, and the other is next to the Bose access road in front of the Villages at Stow development.

Large areas of undeveloped industrial land are also in this area. They are probably undeveloped because Stow is not located directly off of a major highway. There are only three industrial businesses located within West Stow.

Most recently, developers have recognized the potential of the large industrial and residential parcels. One developer worked with the Town to change the Zoning Bylaw to add provisions for an Active Adult Neighborhood (AAN) in an overlay district within the industrial zone. This developer has begun construction for sixty-six age-restricted dwellings. Another developer has used the provisions of M.G.L. 40B to permit a 96-unit development of single-family and condominium units on the industrial land along Great Road. At least one other owner of an industrial parcel has expressed interest in another 66-unit age-restricted development.

The residential development potential for West Stow is significant. With 162 dwelling units presently under construction and the potential for 66 more, the total new dwelling

units or families added to West Stow would be 228. This is a significant increase in Stow's population and for this area of Town in particular.

Other parcels in the area are also being considered for or have the potential for development. A major issue for many of these parcels is access to a road for frontage and the presence of wetlands.

4.6.2 West Stow Village Recommended Actions – We recommend the following actions for West Stow.

4.6.2.1 Smart Growth Principles – *(Priority A)*

Many smart growth principles cannot be applied to this area or to Stow for that matter. However, we need to emphasize the smart growth principles that are applicable, as shown in Appendix E. These principles include compact development, preservation of the environment, and conservation of natural resources.

Responsibility: Planning Board (lead), Conservation Commission

4.6.2.2 Business Zoning – *(Priority C)*

The parcels that are zoned for small business along Great Road and Hudson Road should be developed with businesses and services, such as small convenience shops and other retail businesses, that support the growing number of local residents. We should also investigate expanding our business zone along Hudson Road to improve the services for this area.

Responsibility: Planning Board (lead)

4.6.2.3 Open Space – *(Priority B)*

We have limited protected open space and recreational areas within West Stow. With the aid of the Stow Conservation Trust, we recently protected a small parcel, but the parcel cannot be accessed at this time. Privately owned open space has or will be conveyed to the residents of the Villages at Stow, Kettell Plain Road, Fairway Drive and Arbor Glen developments as part of their development. We should try to provide public access to these parcels. We also recommend an open space corridor within the areas bounded by Hudson Road to Maple Street and from Great Road to the Hudson Town line on Walcott Street. And, we should adopt an Open Space Master Plan to protect land in West Stow, create a trail network, and guide future development.

Responsibility: Conservation Commission (lead), Planning Board

4.6.2.4 Recreation – *(Priority C)*

A small park can potentially be placed along the north side of Great Road between Hudson Road and Lantern Lane (Assessor Map R-9, Parcel 1). The parcel is zoned for both residential and recreation-conservation uses, and it borders Elizabeth Brook and associated wetlands. The development of this land is questionable because of the limited residential zoning, existing wetlands and the provisions of the Rivers Protection Act. We should pursue buying this property for use as a park.

Responsibility: Planning Board (lead), Recreation Commission

4.6.2.5 Coordinate Development – *(Priority B)*

We should support small retail businesses. The Hudson Road and Great Road area has already been developed with a gasoline station/convenience store, a liquor store and a small office building. The business district at the Bose entrance has yet to be developed. With 96 units of housing at the Villages at Stow, 66 units at the Arbor Glen development and 1000+ Bose employees, the potential for small businesses is great. The West Stow area could easily support small retail businesses.

Responsibility: Planning Board (lead)

4.6.2.6 Pedestrian Access - (Priority A)

We should plan for pedestrian access as West Village is developed. A sidewalk is planned for along Great Road from Hudson Road to the Bose entrance. We also need to place sidewalks along Hudson Road from the entrances of Arbor Glen to Great Road, at a minimum. Pedestrian trails within Arbor Glen will provide access to Bose and connect to the pedestrian trails within the Villages at Stow. However, these trails are only useful during daylight hours in non-winter months.

Responsibility: Planning Board (lead), Highway Department

4.6.2.7 Traffic - (Priority A)

Vehicular traffic is already problematic at the intersection of Great Road and Hudson Road. With continued development along Hudson Road and at the Villages at Stow, traffic will become even more of a problem. We need to monitor the effect of traffic and be prepared for traffic calming solutions. For example, a traffic light may be required in the near future.

Responsibility: Board Selectmen (lead)

SECTION 5

COMMUNITY

5.1 Supporting Elements Currently in Place – We have a strong sense of community in Stow. This sense flows from many of the elements described in earlier sections and include:

- Our community pride in open space and the outdoors, including our farms, orchards, golf courses, conservation land, Lake Boon, and the hills of Stow (Pilot Grove, Marble, Gardner, Flagg, Spindle)
- Our villages, including the visual connection of the library, the Town Common, the Fire House, Town Hall and the Town Building and the Assabet River flowing past the Gleasondale Mill and near the clustered residences of Gleasondale
- Our respect for our Town’s history, including our Minutemen, colonial homesteads, burial grounds, and our agricultural heritage
- Our community of people who do things together, in churches, at schools, for bloodmobiles, during recreation, participating in Town Government, and more

As our Town’s demographics and lifestyles change, we must preserve this sense of community while meeting the needs of these changes.

5.1.1 Municipal Services - Reviewing our municipal services reveals several themes that we need to address over the longer term:

- *Manpower:* As our population grows, the needs of our citizens grow, and we need more help to serve those needs.
- *Increasing Complexity:* We rely on citizen volunteers to run much of our municipal government. These volunteers are confronted with increasingly complex technical and legal problems that may require increased use of consultants or additional professional staff.
- *Infrastructure:* Our schools need more space, the Council on Aging wants more or improved space, and many are interested in a multi-generational community center and multi-use recreational fields.
- *Technology:* Our Town government needs to keep pace with changing computer and information technologies.

5.1.2 Financial - We have structural financial limitations, and we must fund increased spending through increased residential taxes and recurring overrides.

- *Undiversified Tax Base:* Our tax base is almost completely undiversified. More than 90% of our tax base is residential, and this percentage is growing. Industrial, commercial, and personal property tax revenues are miniscule.
- *Tax Exemptions and Abatements:* More than 50% of our potentially taxable property is exempted or abated, and the trend is increasing.
- *Low State Aid:* Our tax base represents approximately 87% of our total annual revenue. There is little hope of either significantly increasing other revenue sources, such as local state aid and local receipts, or creating new revenue sources.

5.1.3 Municipal Buildings – School Specific- In May 2001, Town Meeting approved the creation of a School Building Study Committee, which eventually became the School Building Task Force. The School Building Task Force involved our community in a 15-month process that developed a vision for our pre-K-5 elementary school students. The task force considered a myriad of options and seven specific concepts that ranged from renovating both existing schools to creating one completely new school at the Center School site (by razing the existing Center School). With near unanimous support at the 2007 Annual Town Meeting and positive support at the ballot, residents supported a one-site solution that involved renovating and adding a substantial addition to Center School. This proposal addressed the need to keep our schools centrally located in town, using existing buildings whenever possible, and developing a pre-K-8 school campus by using the property adjacent to the Hale Middle School. A conceptual design addressed space needs through 2017, based on current projections, so that our students from pre-K to grade 5 can be taught in a quality, cost-effective school. (Currently our pre-K students are schooled in Bolton and Lancaster.)

Another facet of the School Building Task Force’s proposal, which received town support, was to turn over Pompositticut School, which currently contains grades K-2, to the Town for other municipal uses, such as a community center or a senior center.

The work of the School Building Task Force has been handed to the Elementary School Building Committee, formed by the Selectmen in accordance with the state guidelines overseen by the Massachusetts School Building Authority. This group will hire and oversee the design and construction of the project as outlined in 2007. [At this time, the Massachusetts School Building Authority has not approved Stow to proceed. Without this pre-approval, state assistance is in jeopardy.]

5.1.4 Municipal Buildings - Departmental

- *Police Department:* The building, constructed in 2001, has had chronic maintenance issues including roof leaks.
- *Fire Department:* Additional space may be needed in the future, depending upon manpower increases and equipment. For example, if we eventually need a ladder truck for higher, multi-storied buildings, the current station is not tall enough to house such a vehicle.
- *Highway:* The Highway Barn is adequate for current vehicle storage and highway operations. Depending on the level of growth, more space may be needed to accommodate additional types of vehicles, such as plows for sidewalks.
- *Library:* Within the next five years, we need to address upgrades and expansion of our library facilities.

5.1.5 Community Center and Recreation - As a part of our vision to create additional institutions that foster community involvement, we should consider a multi-generational community center. If a current school building were to be vacated, we may be able to reuse the building for community purposes. Additionally, land parcels may be support a multi-purpose center. We should encourage individual or corporate partnerships through grants or other mechanism as appropriate. We also need to include playing fields as an important part of a community center. Recreation has become

increasingly popular as a means for people to get together and enjoy community activities. (*See Appendix F for more information about a community center.*)

We also desperately need more recreational fields for organized adult and youth groups. Although enrollment in organized sports has more than doubled—and in some cases tripled—in the last ten years, no recreational fields have been created in that time. User groups compete directly with necessary school athletic programs. Existing fields are never rested and are worn out and have been rated in “poor” condition.

- 5.2 Recommended Actions** - As Stow expands and development continues, we need to look for ways to bring people together. Population growth will affect Town departments in different ways. In addition to schools, we need to address additional community needs. Town officials need to remain vigilant in managing to serve an ever-increasing and diverse population. We recommend a number of specific actions to be taken over the next five years.

5.2.1 Schools – (Priority A)

The Elementary School Building Committee is ready to move forward on the proposed renovation and addition at Center School. The delays caused by the Massachusetts School Building Authority could cost the Town more than we may receive. The Board of Selectmen should continue discussions with both the Massachusetts School Building Authority and the Elementary School Building Committee about further action.

The current growth of our elementary population requires five sections in each of our elementary school grades, a population that will move into Hale Middle School in the 2009-2010 school year. Common space changes implemented during the last Hale Middle School renovation are now causing scheduling problems, as the cafeteria is already below space requirements. Next year, related arts classes will move to the first floor to make way for increased classroom needs. Potential renovations may be needed within the next several years to ensure that the middle school has sufficient space for the projected enrollment. We need to begin discussions now with the School District and Capital Planning Committees to plan for the funding needed for renovations to Hale.

Responsibility: Board of Selectmen (lead), School Committee

5.2.2 Community Center – (Priority A)

Establishing a community center requires many considerations (*see Appendix F*). We recommend that Stow’s taxpayers be polled on the value they place on a community center. Timing of this poll is critical, as it must be done within the context of available space, other commitments, etc. Outcome of that poll will determine the path forward.

Responsibility: Board of Selectmen (lead), Recreation Commission

5.2.3 Information Center– (Priority C)

We should coordinate a combined Information and Heritage Center to introduce visitors to Stow’s historical roots, agricultural and recreational offerings.

Responsibility: Board of Selectmen (lead), Stow Business Association

5.2.4 Municipal Properties – (Priority B)

We should prioritize the needs identified in the Municipal Land Use Survey (*see Appendix G*), open a Request for Proposal (RFP) and target parcels that can meet specific needs or can be landbanked for future needs. We should also target parcels contiguous to existing Town-owned properties to expand existing and/or future uses.
Responsibility: Board of Selectmen (lead)

5.2.5 Community Development Director – (Priority A)

We should hire a Community Development Director to assist us in implementing this Master Plan. This position would manage the policies, practices, programs, and projects that have been or will be instituted to achieve and maintain the comprehensive community development goals and objectives identified and defined in this Master Plan.

Responsibility: Board of Selectmen (lead)

5.2.6 Information Technology – (Priority A)

We should use the services of an Information Technology professional to set up and monitor all Town computers and assist in training Town employees in the use of their computers and software. All computers should run the same core software so that Town offices can easily communicate with one another.

Responsibility: Board of Selectmen (lead)

5.2.7 Recreation – (Priority A)

We should proactively look for large parcels of land for recreational facilities, such as ball fields and day camps.

Responsibility: Board of Selectmen (lead)

SECTION 6

HOUSING

- 6.1 Overview of Stow and Our Housing** - Stow is a largely residential community with a distinct country character provided by numerous orchards, golf courses, forests, wetlands, and areas of open space. As a relatively old community (incorporated in 1683), we have a variety of housing stock, including historical dwellings, a few farms and farmhouses, typical New England single and multiple-family dwellings, and limited affordable and elderly housing communities. However, the current mix of our housing stock is overwhelmingly single-family detached homes (91% of all housing units) on moderate to large-sized lots. Further, like much of eastern Massachusetts, the cost of these homes has escalated dramatically with the result that these homes are not available to first-time buyers or those with a limited income.

Thirty years ago, Stow was a community where young families could purchase starter homes. In the last 25 years, while the general consumer price index (CPI) has increased 100%, home prices in Stow have increased 400 – 500%, all but eliminating the possibility of starter homes.

The escalation of home sizes and expense has occurred while the size of the average family in Stow has decreased. Thirty years ago, the average home in Stow housed 3.3 people. Today, the average family size has declined 17% to 2.82. Meanwhile, limited-income Stow residents face an ever-increasing residential tax burden and find few downsizing options in the community they would like to continue to call home. The net result: Stow is becoming a single-class town with little diversity.

We already have a number of policies designed to promote affordable and diversified housing. The Inclusionary Zoning bylaw specifies that developments of six or more units must include at least 10% affordable housing. The Active Adult Neighborhood bylaw allows age-restricted housing to be built on industrial parcels at an increased density, subject to minimum affordability requirements. The CPC (Community Preservation Committee) is working on a program for using CPA (Community Preservation Act) funds to purchase deed restrictions on relatively inexpensive homes to make them permanently affordable and count toward our affordable housing inventory. These efforts should prevent Stow from falling further behind as additional development occurs.

6.2 Analysis of Current Housing Stock

- 6.2.1 Analysis of Housing Prices and Recent New Housing Starts** - The following information is summarized from the Town of Stow Housing Plan (*see the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development website*) and from the Stow Assessors office:

- Stow has an extremely limited number of low-cost and even moderate-cost single-family homes.
- New housing starts continue to escalate in both size and value.

- New housing starts have been averaging between 30-35 units per year over the past 5 years. (34 single-family home building permits were issued in 2006.)

6.2.2 Analysis of Rental Stock - The following information is summarized from the Town of Stow Housing Plan:

- Stow has a considerably smaller percent of rental housing than the greater Boston area.
- The percent of single-family rentals in Stow, as a percent of all rental units, is high (48%). Because single-family rentals are vulnerable to homeownership conversion, the low availability of rental units is in danger of becoming even smaller than it already is.

6.2.3 Analysis of Affordable and Other Moderate-Income Housing Stock - Other observations include:

- Nearly 45% of current Stow homeowners could not afford to buy their current homes if they moved into Stow today.
- As existing Stow residents retire, we have insufficient housing at an affordable price for those who wish to "downsize" their homes and remain in Stow.
- With the rising prices of both existing and new housing stock, the population in Stow is becoming increasingly affluent as homes are sold. This has a two-fold impact on increasing local taxes:
 - More affluent residents can afford higher taxes, tend to want better schools and services, and will support local expenditure increases (even if it means passing a tax override).
 - A higher median income results in less state aid, which in turn requires property owners to pay for more of our local expenditures through a tax levy.

As a result, our local property taxes are increasing faster than if we had a more financially diverse population.

6.3 Analysis of Needs - We lack affordable, low-cost, and moderate housing in Stow. Looking at the current population in this area, we see a need for housing, including rental and ownership, that supports various income levels. Without intervention, this need will most likely grow.

6.4 The Impact of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40B

6.4.1 Anti-Snob Zoning Law - Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40B, is often referred to as the "anti-snob" zoning law. Also known as the Comprehensive Permit Law, Chapter 40B is a state law that encourages the development of low- and moderate-income housing. Communities are encouraged to achieve at least 10% affordable housing, defined in the law as "low or moderate income housing:" housing that is subsidized by the federal or state government to assist in its construction. People who can buy or rent affordable homes must earn 80% or less of the area median income.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) considers Stow to be in the Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA-NH metropolitan area with a median income of

\$82,400 in 2007. To qualify for affordable housing in Stow, a family of four cannot earn more than \$66,150. HUD reviews and updates the income limits every year in the March timeframe. (*See the HUD User website at www.huduser.org.*)

- 6.4.2 **Planned Production Strategy** - If a community has an affordable housing development plan (a planned production strategy) and is making steady progress toward achieving its goals, it can achieve immunity from Chapter 40B development. We already have a planned production strategy, but we need to increase the number of affordable homes in Town by 0.75% each year for immunity. Based on the total number of homes in Stow, 0.75% represents 17 affordable units or a 50-unit development every three years, and this is difficult to attain despite the affordable housing tools we have adopted over the past few years. The total number of homes also continues to increase, increasing the number of affordable units that we need each year for immunity.
- 6.4.3 **Residential Development in Industrial Zones** - Developers who agree to conform to the requirements of Chapter 40B can ask for waivers from local rules and regulations that would make the development financially infeasible. Developers typically request to waive the requirement that homes cannot be developed in industrial areas. We have limited industrially zoned land in Stow, and we already have one Chapter 40B development on industrial land. We risk losing more of our potential, non-resident tax base if homes continue to be built on our industrial land.
- 6.4.4 **Increased Build out** - Chapter 40B development will increase build out in Stow and the services that residents will need.
- 6.4.5 **Potential Changes** - There are a number of proposals before the legislature to change Chapter 40B. These changes may remain imminent for a long time to come.
- 6.4.6 **The Villages at Stow** - The most recent, approved Chapter 40B development is The Villages at Stow, located in West Stow on industrial land.
- 6.4.7 **Conclusions** - Chapter 40B is the law, and we must adhere to it. Therefore, we have two choices:
- Proactively establish policies and programs so that we can consistently meet our affordable housing goals, thereby immunizing our residential growth against unplanned and potentially catastrophic large-scale developments that need not conform to our Zoning Bylaw
 - Admit that we cannot (or will not) make the individual and town-wide investments and trade-offs to conform to Chapter 40B requirements, and resort to crisis management when the next Comprehensive Permit hearings begin
- 6.5 **Housing Organizations in Stow** - Several organizations are involved with affordable housing in Stow, often with overlapping goals or responsibilities.
- 6.5.1 **Stow Elderly Housing Corporation** - The Stow Elderly Housing Corporation (SEHC) was created by Town Meeting in 1979. It secured a federal grant to build Plantation

Apartments in 1982. It has recently refinanced Plantation Apartments to refurbish the structures and make them viable for the next 20 years.

- 6.5.2 **Stow Housing Authority** - The Stow Housing Authority (SHA) administers a housing voucher program that consists of 26 state and federal vouchers. Created in the late 1980s, the SHA originally provided the backup vouchers that ensured that the affordable units at Pilot Grove would have reliable subsidy.
- 6.5.3 **Stow Community Housing Corporation** - An offshoot of the SEHC, the Stow Community Housing Corporation (SCHC) was formed in 1987 to create affordable housing for the entire community, not just the elderly. It created Pilot Grove Apartments, a mixed-income rental development that has 60 units. There are 37 affordable units at Pilot Grove, an unusual level of affordability. Permanent deed restrictions for affordability were acquired using Community Preservation funds.
- 6.5.4 **Community Preservation Committee** - Stow passed the Massachusetts Community Preservation Act (CPA) in 2001, which led to the creation of the Community Preservation Committee (CPC). The CPC administers the CPA funds, which come from a 3% property tax surcharge and (to-date) a 100% match by the State. The CPC is required to spend at least 10% of its revenue on each of affordable housing, historical preservation, and open space preservation.
- 6.5.5 **Stow Housing Partnership** - As a result of recommendations in the Community Development Plan, created by the Master Plan Committee working with State EO418 funds, the Board of Selectmen created a Stow Housing Partnership (SHP) in 2005. The goal of the SHP is to be the primary focal point for all housing activities in Stow. This committee should be responsible for:
- Lead the strategic housing planning for the Town (such as maintaining a long-term housing production schedule)
 - Act as an advisor to the various Town boards on housing affairs
 - Interact with various governmental and private funding vehicles to ensure ongoing funding for housing
 - Play an advocacy role for realistic ways to increase the diversity of homes and supply of affordable ownership and rental homes in Stow
- 6.5.6 **Stow Affordable Housing Trust** - Town Meeting accepted a new State statute in 2005 that allowed the Board of Selectmen to create a Stow Affordable Housing Trust. The Stow Affordable Housing Trust is a public corporation that can receive monies intended for affordable housing from all sources and expend them as it sees fit to create affordable housing. A Community Development Director would be invaluable in creating and implementing a workable Affordable Housing Plan in conjunction with the Stow Affordable Housing Trust.
- 6.6 **Bylaw and Policy Provisions Pertaining to Affordable Housing**
- 6.6.1 **Active Adult Neighborhood Zoning** - We passed an Active Adult Neighborhood (AAN) zoning bylaw in 2001. It allows denser housing for over-55 residents in an

overlay district that includes much of the industrially zoned land in Stow. It requires that 15% of the homes be affordable. Developers may make a cash payment in lieu of developing affordable units.

6.6.2 Inclusionary Zoning - We passed an Inclusion of Affordable Housing bylaw (also commonly known as Inclusionary Zoning) in 2003. Inclusionary Zoning will prevent large new developments from putting Stow even further behind in meeting our affordable housing targets. The bylaw requires all developments with 6 units or more to make at least 10% of those units affordable.

6.6.3 Comprehensive Permit Policy - The Board of Selectmen and the Planning Board adopted a comprehensive permit policy in 2002.

6.7 Evaluation of Housing Options - Without active intervention, developers will continue to produce large-lot and expensive housing in Stow. As a result, our housing stock will become even less diverse and remain subject to unplanned and potentially damaging Chapter 40B development. We have many options and alternatives:

- Establish a coherent, comprehensive and proactive housing policy for the Town
- Establish a program to evaluate changes to our Zoning Bylaw to encourage the building of diversified housing stock
- Commit a percentage of each year's CPA revenue in addition to the required 10%, to affordable housing, in order to fund a Local Housing Program
- Appoint members to the Stow Affordable Housing Trust.
- Integrate affordable housing into our next Open Space and Recreation Plan by identifying lands of conservation interest that would be suitable candidates for limited development of affordable housing, particularly where structures exist
- Modify the Comprehensive Permit Policy of December 2002 to reflect political reality or educate the Town on the validity of its recommendations

6.8 Recommendations

We recommend and strongly endorse the following measures. These recommendations should let us make significant progress towards our affordable housing goals. The goal of 10% affordable housing or 0.75% per year is very difficult to attain. However, should we achieve these goals, then we will no longer be subject to externally imposed Chapter 40B developments and let us control our Town's development.

6.8.1 Housing Policy - (Priority A)

Establish a comprehensive and proactive housing policy. This will be the primary task for the Stow Housing Partnership.

Responsibility: Stow Housing Partnership (lead), Board of Selectmen

6.8.2 Stow Affordable Housing Trust - (Priority A)

The Board of Selectmen should create and appoint members to the Stow Affordable Housing Trust.

Responsibility: Board of Selectmen (lead)

6.8.3 Community Development Director - (Priority A)

We must hire a Community Development Director to assist the Stow Affordable Housing Trust.

Responsibility: Stow Affordable Housing Trust (lead)

6.8.4 Community Preservation Act Funds - (Priority A)

Once the Stow Affordable Housing Trust is operational, the Community Preservation Committee should recommend at Annual Town Meeting to allocate the 10% required funding for affordable housing to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. This will allow the Stow Affordable Housing Trust to respond quickly to new affordable housing opportunities. In addition, housing advocates should present projects of such scope and attractiveness that the Community Preservation Committee and Town Meeting would support using additional Community Preservation funds for affordable housing.

Responsibility: Stow Housing Partnership (lead), Community Preservation Committee, Board of Selectmen

6.8.5 Zoning Amendments - (Priority B)

The Planning Board should propose changes to the Zoning Bylaw to encourage the building of diversified housing stock. These changes may include allowing denser development in villages, transfer of development rights, and common wall housing in designated districts.

Responsibility: Planning Board (lead)

6.8.6 Identify Parcels and Existing Buildings – (Priority A)

The Stow Housing Partnership should identify land parcels or existing buildings that would be suitable for mixed income and mixed use development projects.

Responsibility: Stow Housing Partnership (lead)

SECTION 7					
PRIORITIES and “ASSIGNMENTS”					
OPEN SPACE					
Priority A	Responsible Party	Priority B	Responsible Party	Priority C	Responsible Party
Rail Trail (Section 3.2.3)	Board of Selectmen	Easements (Section 3.2.3)	Conservation Commission	Education on Resources (Section 3.2.1)	Conservation Commission
Crow Island (Section 3.2.4)	Board of Selectmen			Emerald Necklace (Section 3.2.2)	Conservation Commission
Lake Boon (Section 3.2.5)	Board of Selectmen			Agricultural Based Businesses (Section 3.2.7)	Planning Board
Low Impact Development (Section 3.2.6)	Planning Board				
Chapter 61 (Section 3.2.8)	Board of Selectmen				
VILLAGES					
Mixed-Use Overlay Districts (Section 4.2.1)	Planning Board	Transfer of Development Rights (Section 4.2.2)	Planning Board	Demolition Delay Bylaw (Section 4.2.5)	Planning Board
Water and Sewer (Section 4.2.3) (Section 4.3.2.3) (Section 4.4.2.2)	Board of Selectmen				
Traffic, Parking, Mobility (Section 4.2.4)	Planning Board				
Lower Village Mixed- Use Overlay District (Section 4.3.2.1)	Planning Board				

PRIORITIES and “ASSIGNMENTS”**VILLAGES - Continued**

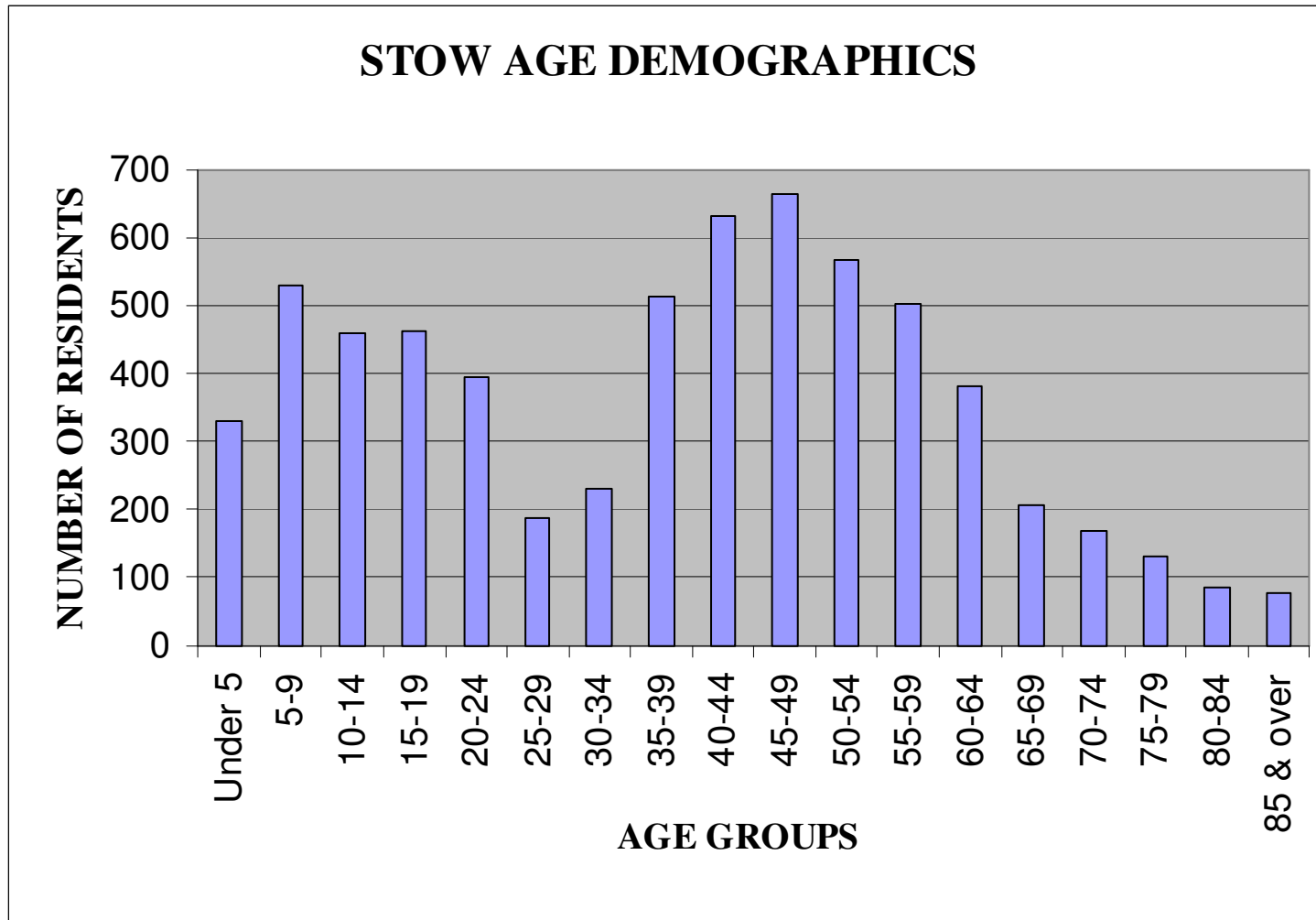
Priority A	Responsible Party	Priority B	Responsible Party	Priority C	Responsible Party
Implementation of Traffic Study Recommendations (Section 4.3.2.2)	Planning Board				
Lower Village Improvement Plan (Section 4.3.2.4)	Planning Board				
Gleasondale Village Mixed-Use Overlay District (Section 4.4.2.1)	Planning Board				
Restore Gleasondale Mill (Section 4.4.2.3)	Planning Board				
Gleasondale Village Sub-Committee (Section 4.4.2.4)	Planning Board				
Center Village Zoning (Section 4.5.2.1)	Planning Board			Center Village Water and Sewer (Section 4.5.2.3)	Planning Board
Center of Education (Section 4.5.2.2)	Board of Selectmen				
Center Village Parking/ Sidewalks (Section 4.5.2.4)	Selectmen				
West Village Smart Growth Principles (Section 4.6.2.1)	Planning Board	West Village Open Space (Section 4.6.2.3)	Planning Board	West Village Business Zoning (Section 4.6.2.2)	Planning Board
West Village Pedestrian Access (Section 4.6.3.1.1)	Planning Board	Coordinate West Village Business Development (Section 4.6.3.1)	Planning Board	West Village Recreation Space (Section 4.6.2.4)	Planning Board
West Village Traffic (Section 4.6.3.2)	Board of Selectmen				

PRIORITIES and “ASSIGNMENTS”**COMMUNITY**

Priority A	Responsible Party	Priority B	Responsible Party	Priority C	Responsible Party
School Complex (Section 5.2.1)	Board of Selectmen	Prioritize Municipal Land Use Needs (Section 5.2.4)	Board of Selectmen	Information Center (Section 5.2.3)	Board of Selectmen
Community Center (Section 5.2.2)	Board of Selectmen				
Community Development Director (Section 5.2.5)	Board of Selectmen				
Professional Information Technology Staff (Section 5.2.6)	Board of Selectmen				
Land for Recreation Use (Section 5.2.7)	Board of Selectmen				

HOUSING

Priority A	Responsible Party	Priority B	Responsible Party	Priority C	Responsible Party
Housing Policy (Section 6.8.1)	Stow Housing Partnership	Zoning Amendments (Section 6.8.5)	Stow Housing Partnership		
Affordable Housing Trust (Section 6.8.2)	Board of Selectmen				
Community Development Director (Section 6.8.3)	Stow Affordable Housing Trust				
Community Preservation Act Funds (Section 6.8.4)	Stow Housing Partnership				
Identify Parcels (Section 6.8.6)	Stow Housing Partnership				



Demographics

Population Forecast – Prepared by Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)

	2000	2010	2020	2030
STOW	5,902	6,507	6,775	6,990

Population Projection by Age Group – Prepared by MAPC

Age	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030
00-04	421	510	473	515	556
05-09	378	470	330	303	320
10-14	380	442	599	582	616
15-19	367	335	493	482	472
20-24	310	156	171	162	146
25-29	284	200	163	186	170
30-34	437	375	233	272	269
35-39	547	615	334	302	339
40-44	579	615	591	462	544
45-49	485	534	749	608	586
50-54	355	505	855	874	760
55-59	268	393	533	660	573
60-64	150	267	446	612	634
65-69	117	188	200	308	388
70-74	85	99	113	191	243
75-79	70	88	89	119	175
80-85	42	62	73	73	124
85+	53	48	60	62	74
TOTAL	5,328	5,902	6,507	6,775	6,990

Employment Projection – Prepared by MAPC

Sector	2000	2010	2020	2030
Natural Resource, Mining, Construction	139	164	182	197
Manufacturing	113	110	106	103
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	1,011	1,115	1,189	1,251
Information	14	16	17	18
Financial Activities	58	65	71	75
Professional and Business Services	273	320	355	385
Education and Health Services	205	232	253	270
Leisure and Hospitality	145	165	180	193
Other Services	41	47	52	56
Government	232	252	265	277
Total	2,231	2,485	2,671	2,825

MAPC Demographics link: http://www.mapc.org/data_gis.html

Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000**Source: U. S. Census Bureau, census 2000**

Subject	Number	Percent	Subject	Number	Percent
Total Population	5902	100.00	HISPANIC OR LATINO AND RACE		
SEX and AGE			Total population	5,902	100.00
Male	2,948	49.9	Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	84	1.4
Female	2,954	50.1	Mexican	20	0.3
Under 5 years	510	8.6	Puerto Rican	20	0.3
5 to 9 years	470	8.0	Cuban	2	-
10 to 14 years	442	7.5	Other Hispanic or Latino	42	0.7
15 to 19 years	335	5.7	Not Hispanic or Latino	5,818	98.6
20 to 24 years	156	2.6	White alone	5,589	94.7
25 to 34 years	575	9.7			
35 to 44 years	1,230	20.8	RELATIONSHIP		
45 to 54 years	1,039	17.6	Total population	5,902	100.00
55 to 59 years	393	6.7	In households	5,873	99.5
60 to 64 years	267	4.5	Householder	2,082	35.3
65 o 74 years	287	4.9	Spouse	1,513	25.6
75 to 84 years	150	2.5	Child	1956	33.1
85 years and over	48	0.8	Own child under 18 years	1,613	27.3
			Other relatives	162	2.7
Median age (years)	38.8	(X)	Under 18 years	51	0.9
			Nonrelatives	160	2.7
18 years and over	4,235	71.8	Unmarried partner	79	1.3
Male	2,031	34.4	In group quarters	29	0.5
Female	2,204	37.3	Institutionalized population	26	0.4
21 years and over	4,109	69.6	Non Institutionalized population	3	0.1
62 years and over	636	10.8			
65 years and over	485	8.2	HOUSEHOLD TYPE		
Male	212	3.6	Total households	2,082	100.0
Female	273	4.6	Family households (families)	1,678	80.6
			With own children under 18 years	864	41.5
RACE			Married-couple family	1,513	72.7
One race	5,807	98.4	With own children under 18 years	781	37.5
White	5,635	95.5	Female householder, no husband present	124	6.0
Black or African American	21	0.4	With own children under 18 years	70	3.4
American Indian and Alaska Native	11	0.2	Nonfamily households	404	19.4
Asian	120	2.0	Householder living alone	308	14.8
Asian Indian	56	0.9	Householder 65 years and over	111	55.3
Chinese	28	0.5			
Filipino	4	0.1	Households with individuals under 18 years	896	43.0
Japanese	5	0.1	Households with individuals 65 years and over	345	16.6
Korean	17	0.3			
Vietnamese	3	0.1	Average household size	2.82	(X)
Other Asian (1)	7	0.1	Average family size	3.16	(X)
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	-	-			
Native Hawaiian	-	-	HOUSING OCCUPANCY		
Guamanian or Chamorro	-	-	Total housing units	2,128	100.0
Samoan	-	-	Occupied housing units	2,082	97.8
Other Pacific Islander (2)	-	-	Vacant housing units	46	2.2
Some other race	20	0.3	For seasonal, recreational, or occasional use	20	0.9
Two or more races	95	1.6			
			Homeowner vacancy rate (percent)	0.3	(X)
Race alone or in combination with one or more other race			Rental vacancy rate (percent)	0.7	(X)
White	5,726	97.0	HOUSING TENURE		
Black or African American	38	0.6	Occupied housing units	2,082	100.0
American Indian and Alaska Native	34	0.6	Owner-occupied housing units	1,813	87.1
Asian	161	2.7	Renter-occupied housing units	269	12.9
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	1	-	Average household size of owner-occupied units	2.95	(X)
Some other race	38	0.6	Average household size of renter-occupied units	1.94	(X)

Represents zero or rounds to zero. (X) Not applicable. (1) Represents other Asian alone, or two or more Asian categories. (2) Other Pacific Islander alone, or two or more Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander categories. (3) In combination with one or more of the other races listed. The six numbers may add to more than total population and the six percentages may add to more than 100 percent because individuals may report more than one race.

Potential Build Out - In the year 2000, the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) published a projection for the Town of Stow showing the potential build out given the existing zoning bylaws and undeveloped land. At build out, Stow's population will be 9,582 residents vs. our present 6,385 residents with a school population of 1,726 students vs. our present population of 1,148 students. Dwelling units will increase from the present 2,300 to 3,447. This does not count the dwelling units permitted under Stow's Active Adult Neighborhood Overlay District (the underlying district is industrial or commercial) and Chapter 40B developments, which are not considered by the EOEA. The detailed projections can be viewed at the EOEA website.

The following is a brief tabulation of the build out results:

Demographic Projections

<i>Population</i>		
1990	5,328	people
2000	5,902	people
Build out	9,482	people
<i>Students</i>		
1990	884	students
2000	1,027	students
Build out	1,726	students
<i>Households</i>		
1990	1,793	dwelling units
2000	2,128	dwelling units
Build out	3,447	dwelling units
<i>Water Use (gallons/day)</i>		
1990	79,128	gallons
Build out	595,043	gallons
<i>Build Out Impact</i>		
Additional residents	3,689	people
Additional school children	699	children
Additional residential units	1,319	dwelling units
Additional developable land area (acres)	2,857	acres
Additional solid waste (tons/year)	1,888	tons
Additional roadways at build out (miles)	30	miles

Insert List of properties enrolled

Insert Map

Transfer of Development Rights

Smart Growth

Smart growth is a principle of land development that emphasizes mixing land uses, increases the availability of a range of housing types in neighborhoods, takes advantage of compact design, and fosters distinctive and attractive communities. It preserves open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas; strengthens existing communities; provides a variety of transportation choices; makes development decisions predictable, fair, and cost-effective; and encourages community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.

Attractive village and town centers, vibrant residential neighborhoods, historic mill buildings, and fields, forests, and streams characterize Stow. Revitalizing and reinforcing these areas is a key smart growth strategy. A critical component of smart growth is identifying the areas that are appropriate for development and those that should be protected and preserved. Good candidates for development include Stow's villages, as defined in Section 4.

The State has worked hard to encourage planning and development that protects our natural resources, promotes social and economic health and meets the needs of our residents. As a basic guide to local officials, developers, and citizens about what smart growth is, the Office for Commonwealth Development released the Sustainable Development Principles.

The Master Plan Committee recommends adoption of these principles:

Redevelop First: Communities should revitalize existing neighborhoods in a way that doesn't consume forest and fields, and find new uses for historic buildings and underutilized brownfield sites, such as the Gleasondale Mill.

Concentrate Development: Compact development conserves land and fosters vibrant and walkable districts, as proposed in Section 4 for our villages.

Be Fair: The benefits and burdens of development should be equitable and shared by all. Transparent and predictable permitting will result in cost-effective and fair outcomes.

Restore and Enhance the Environment: The conservation, protection, and restoration of water, land, and cultural resources provide a high quality of life and ecological health.

Conserve Natural Resources: Renewable energy and efficient use of building materials and water contribute to a healthier environment, limit waste, and are cost-effective.

Expand Housing Opportunities: Expanding the number, affordability, and diversity of housing units will ensure that people of all abilities, income levels, and ages have appropriate housing options.

Provide Transportation Choice: Opportunities for public transit, walking, and biking should be expanded.

Increase Job Opportunities: Connecting people with jobs in their communities and close to homes and transportation infrastructure will expand our economy.

Foster Sustainable Businesses: Great potential exists for new innovative industries and for resource-based industries to contribute to the social, economic, and environmental health of our state.

Plan Regionally: Economic development, water, transportation, and housing are regional in nature; they don't stop at the town boundary. Regional planning recognizes this and results in inter-municipal coordination and better outcomes.

We recommend considering the following smart growth techniques in planning for the future growth of Stow:

Transfer of Development Rights: (*See Appendix D.*)

Village-Style Development: Includes a variety of housing types, a mix of land uses, an active center, and a walkable design. (*See Section 4.*)

Open Space Residential Design: An approach to residential development that promotes open space preservation, based on environmental and social priority. It features partnership in development design between municipal officials and developers that provides innovative flexible incentive for highest marketability, mixed housing types and land uses, and minimal disturbance to the natural terrain.

Accessory Dwelling Units: An Accessory Dwelling Unit is a self-contained apartment in an owner-occupied single-family home that is either attached to the principal dwelling or in a separate structure on the same property. Accessory units (also known as accessory apartments, guest apartments, in-law apartments, family apartments, or secondary units) provide supplementary housing that can be integrated into existing single-family neighborhoods to provide a low priced housing alternative with little or no negative impact on the character of the neighborhood.

District Improvement Financing (DIF) and Tax Increment Financing (TIF): District Improvement Financing (DIF) and Tax Increment Financing (TIF) are economic tools that promote redevelopment by use of public/private partnerships. TIF offers tax breaks to developers, while DIF channels tax dollars to targeted redevelopment districts.

Low Impact Development (LID): Low Impact Development (LID) is a more sustainable land development pattern that results from a site planning process that first identifies critical natural resources, and then determines appropriate building envelopes. LID also incorporates a range of best management practices (BMPs) that preserve the natural hydrology of the land.

Inclusionary Zoning: Inclusionary Zoning requires a portion of the housing units in certain real estate developments to be reserved as affordable to low and moderate-income households. It is

an effective tool that can be used to ensure that adequate affordable units are included in the normal course of real estate development.

Preserving Agricultural Land and Farming Opportunities: Preserving agricultural land and farming opportunities in Massachusetts has been a high priority of state and local officials for several decades. Through a variety of state and local initiatives, opportunities have emerged for agricultural preservation. Many communities have successfully preserved land and farming opportunities using a wide array of financial and legal tools.

Brownfields Reuse: The State is committed to the cleanup and redevelopment of brownfield properties as a way to stimulate the economy and promote environmental protection goals. Several incentives are available to developers, including assistance with insurance and flexibility in remediation schedules.

Water Resources: Water is a finite resource that needs to be managed to meet current and future human needs, as well as those of the environment. Our approaches to water management must ensure continued and sufficient quantity and quality of water for current and future human uses, while maintaining ecological integrity.

The following web pages address smart growth:

http://www.mass.gov/envir/smart_growth_toolkit/

<http://www.ma-smartgrowth.org/>

<http://www.environmentalleague.org/Issues/Land/SmartGrowthAlliance.html>

The principles referred to in the Master Plan Actions draw from this body of knowledge.

Stow Community Center

Background - A Stow Community Center would be a facility that encourages all residents to congregate for any number of activities. We envision one community center that finds creative ways to accommodate all constituents simultaneously.

We do not advocate a separate youth center, a separate senior center, a separate club room. We envision one Stow community facility that, by its physical plant and by its activities, will bring people together.

Most spaces within the community center would be shared among various groups and have multiple uses. The over-fifty generation, as well as the youth of Stow, would both use an indoor basketball court. The walking path would be great for our seniors but just as easily could be used by children on bicycles.

Options - One option is that one of our existing schools may become available for this purpose. In future years, the facility and land could be returned to school use if needed.

We expect that after a short time, the Stow community center would be a break-even operation and not a drain on taxpayers.

The shape and form of the community center is of little consequence. The major objective is an attractive and active facility that draws residents together. Our Town character does not require a luxury facility. The community center could be a utilitarian site that fosters gatherings.

Some Considerations - A community center would include shared facilities, such as:

- A single shared location
- Use of existing Town facilities to avoid new construction
- Recreation facilities and fields, which are a natural compliment
- Meeting rooms with excellent audio visual equipment are mandatory
- A gym and fitness center for residents
- A stage and sound system to attract performing artists
- Food preparation and service area for general use and catered events
- Locker rooms with showers
- Storage space

- Specialized services to accommodate pre-school children, teens, clubs, service groups, a Learning Center, and future needs

Conclusion - People bond only if they meet and share experiences. A shared experience brings people together. A Stow community center, dedicated to helping residents gather and share experiences, would enhance Stow as a community.

MUNICIPAL NEEDS SURVEY - 2006							
<i>Department</i>	<i>Needs & Amount</i>	<i>When?</i>	<i>Uses</i>	<i>Population Served</i>	<i>Requirements</i>	<i>Share?</i>	<i>Comments</i>
LAND							
Council on Aging	L: 2 acres B: 5430 sq. ft.	Now	Services and support for seniors' building and associated parking	Population increasing to 1,100 by 2005	Well and septic. Location close to Town. Parking. Dining and office and activities space,.	Y	Plans available.
School Building Task Force/NRSD	Up to 30 acres	Now	To house pre-K-5 elementary school children. More building space for grades 6-8 within next 5 years.	All families with applicable school aged children.	Adequate to support needs for a school. Flat land preferred. Soil must support well and septic.	Not out of question, esp. with recreation.	Need is past due.
Stow Housing Partnership		Now	Affordable housing and housing that diversifies present housing stock.	Many	Land should be suitable for cost-effective housing development. Locations would include Lower Village, Gleasondale. Consistent with smart growth principles, infill parcels also appropriate. Small parcels for affordable housing, large for mixed-use development.	Y, Schools, municipal, mixed uses w/ commercial and open space.	Additional funding sources required for Town-sponsored affordable development. Other options such as public-private partnerships may be required. Current shortfall for 40B purposes is 114 units. Affordability gap exists for those earning median household income.

MUNICIPAL NEEDS SURVEY - 2006							
<i>Department</i>	<i>Needs & Amount</i>	<i>When?</i>	<i>Uses</i>	<i>Population Served</i>	<i>Requirements</i>	<i>Share?</i>	<i>Comments</i>
LAND							
Fire Department	L: unknown B: 2x current	Now	New fire station or addition to current building.	Entire town	Close to Town Center. Sub-station near Lake Boon .		Have outgrown current station Public safety study being prepared.
Recreation Department		ASAP	Recreation program and space for recreation. Huge need for more soccer and softball fields. See also Stow Soccer Club.		Road access and flat area for soccer fields.	Could share building with COA for a rec/senior center. Soccer/soft-ball field could be shared w/schools in area.	
Stow Soccer Club	5-7 acres	Now	3 soccer fields and associated parking.	459 registered players in 2005 (1300 if include parents).	Seeking multi-field complex (i.e., a second Pine Bluffs). Flat land would require less development. Need adequate parking.	Yes, willing to rent, lease or own w/other projects or groups. Willing to develop a piece of larger conservation project.	Existing field space stretched to limit and fields suffering from overuse. Club anticipates continued growth in population of school-aged children.
Town Clerk	Unknown	Now	Parking	Users of Town Building, Town Hall, Library.		Y	Insufficient parking on some meeting nights.

MUNICIPAL NEEDS SURVEY - 2006							
<i>Department</i>	<i>Needs & Amount</i>	<i>When?</i>	<i>Uses</i>	<i>Population Served</i>	<i>Requirements</i>	<i>Share?</i>	<i>Comments</i>
LAND							
Conservation Commission			Protect biological and ecological diversity, water supply and water quality, scenic views, recreation, historic preservation, community character, and agricultural lands.				Need to discuss and evaluate land owned by the Town as a result of tax takings. Open Space Plan identifies a few of these as high priorities for conservation.
Open Space Committee	Varies	Over time	Acquire and protect open space, particularly as directed or informed by Stow Open Space & Recreation Plan.	Entire town	Same as uses	Yes, if open space is properly delineated.	Collaboration with Conservation Commission, Community Preservation Committee, Stow Conservation Trust and others.
Historical Commission	See comments.						May need a pump on Town land to support a sprinkler system for Town Hall.
Community Preservation Committee	Varies	Over time	Acquire and protect open space, preserve historic buildings, landscapes, create and maintain affordable housing.	Entire town	Varies	Yes, with creative approach and subject to restrictions.	
Lower Village Subcommittee of Planning Board	10 acres	2006	Sewerage treatment facility and leaching fields and well and zone 1 protection.				

MUNICIPAL NEEDS SURVEY - 2006							
<i>Department</i>	<i>Needs & Amount</i>	<i>When?</i>	<i>Uses</i>	<i>Population Served</i>	<i>Requirements</i>	<i>Share?</i>	<i>Comments</i>
BUILDING SPACE							
Planning Board	22x24 room	Now	Room for public hearings/meetings	20-30	Expansion of space on 3rd floor triggers need for bathroom facilities.	Y	Interest in centralized record filing/storage location.
Stow Police Department	192 sq ft	Now	Climate-controlled room for computer equipment for 911 (new system); office space, an addition for dispatch area.			N	Office space and computer room can be accommodated upstairs in existing building. Dispatch area extra, includes bathroom. Public safety study being prepared.
Stow TV/Local Access Channel Advisory Committee		Some short-term improvements could be made now.	Working space for equipment and one person at a minimum, preferably more. Secure storage for equipment. Studio space also desired.	Cable subscribers in Town. Approx/ one half the population.	Prefer to stay in Town building.	Some uses are noisy; need ability to close door.	Current space cramped and awkward (sloped ceiling). Currently sharing with Town server and file cabinet, no ventilation. Climate control issues pretty important.
Highway Department		ASAP	Storage and office space.				Public safety study being prepared.
Food Pantry			Room to hold food for distribution to needy families.		Room for 2 refrigerators, 2 freezers and 20 feet of shelves for dry goods. Need parking for several cars, optimally out of sight.		Food distributed twice per month.

MUNICIPAL NEEDS SURVEY - 2006							
<i>Department</i>	<i>Needs & Amount</i>	<i>When?</i>	<i>Uses</i>	<i>Population Served</i>	<i>Requirements</i>	<i>Share?</i>	<i>Comments</i>
BUILDING SPACE							
Lake Boon Commission		Unknown point in future.	Filing space and possible boat storage at some point in future.	50-75	Septic system to handle at least 150 people, meeting hall for 50-75 scouts/leaders, safe pedestrian access, reasonable amount of parking.	Y	Has historically relied on Town, schools and churches for needs. Would like permanent, reliable facilities. Support idea of a Community Center.
Troop 1 Stow, Boy Scouts of America	Approx. 1000 sq. ft. plus storage.	Need is current for equipment storage, need for permanent meeting space not urgent.	Need for permanent, reliable meeting space. Also, need for equipment storage for tents, stoves, canoes, etc.				
FILE SPACE							
Board of Health	1/2 again current space.	Now	Records storage	Entire Town	In Town building	Y	Shared record storage with other Town boards very desirable.
Building Department	Larger office or central file room.	3-5 years	Documents storage	Entire Town		Y	Could be shared with other Town depts.
Town Clerk		Within five years	Records storage for Town departments and committees.				Received quote of \$35,000 in 2004 for rolling shelves system that would double capacity.
See Lake Boon Commission above							

MUNICIPAL NEEDS SURVEY - 2006							
<i>Department</i>	<i>Needs & Amount</i>	<i>When?</i>	<i>Uses</i>	<i>Population Served</i>	<i>Requirements</i>	<i>Share?</i>	<i>Comments</i>
NO NEEDS							
Capital Planning Committee							
Board of Selectmen							
BUILDING SPACE							
Treasurer-Collector							Current office space meets their needs. Future needs could be met by purchasing additional furniture and file cabinets.
Zoning Board of Appeals							
NO RESPONSE							
Randall Library							
Stow Housing Authority							
Cemetery Department							

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Useful Links

The following Internet sites contain important information. Each site provides extensive information. In some cases, the site map shows the vast amounts of data and subjects offered by the site.

Stow

Stow Town Government - <http://www.stow-ma.gov/Pages/index>:

- Departments and Boards
- Zoning and Land Use Regulations
- Meeting Calendar (Official Calendar posted at Town Building)
- Town Documents
- Online Tax Payments
- Approved plan for Planned Production - A Housing Plan for Stow, Massachusetts
<http://www.mass.gov/dhcd/components/SCP/PProd/apStow.pdf>

Schools:

- Nashoba Regional School District - <http://www.nrsd.net/>
- Pompositticut and Center (Elementary) Schools - <http://center.nrsd.net/>
- Hale (Middle) School - <http://hale.nrsd.net>
- Nashoba Regional High School - <http://nrhs.nrsd.net/>
- Minuteman Regional Vocational Technical School - <http://minuteman.org/>

State Representation:

- Massachusetts Representative (Third Middlesex District) Patricia A. Walrath - <http://www.mass.gov/legis/member/pawl.htm>
- Massachusetts Senator (Middlesex and Worcester) Pamela P. Resor - <http://www.mass.gov/legis/member/ppr0.htm>

Land Protection:

- Stow Conservation Trust - <http://www.stowconservationtrust.org/news.htm>
- SVT (Sudbury Valley Trustees) - <http://www.sudburyvalleytrustees.org/>
- Friends of the Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge - <http://www.farnwr.org/>

Federal Government

- U.S. Senator Edward Kennedy - <http://kenedy.senate.gov/>
- U.S. Senator John Kerry - <http://kerry.senate.gov/>
- U.S. Representative (Fifth District) Tsongas - <http://tsongas.house.gov/>

Massachusetts State Government

Massachusetts State Government - <http://www.mass.gov/>

Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs - <http://www.mass.gov/envir/>

- Smart Growth and the Smart Growth Toolkit
- Low Impact Development
- Agricultural Resources
- Conservation and Recreation
- Environmental Protection
- Fish and Game
- Community Preservation
- Build out Analysis

Department of Environmental Protection - <http://www.mass.gov/dep/>

- Title 5
- Public Water Supplies
- Storm water Management
- Hazardous Waste Management
- Rivers Protection

Department of Housing and Economic Development

<http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=ehedhomepage&L=1&L0=Home&sid=Ehed>

- Affordable Housing
- 40B Developments

Department of Revenue

<http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=dorhomepage&L=1&L0=Home&sid=Ador>

- Tax Information
- Community Preservation Regulations

Office of Geographic and Environmental Information - <http://www.mass.gov/mgis/>

- Geographic Information System (GIS)
- Massachusetts mapping data

Middlesex South District Registry of Deeds

<http://www.sec.state.ma.us/rod/rodmidsth/midsthidx.htm>

- Deeds, Plans, Covenants, etc. 1974-present

Massachusetts General Law - <http://www.mass.gov/legis/laws/mgl/index.htm>

- Chapters and Sections

Metropolitan Area Planning Council - <http://www.mapc.org/>

- Regional Planning
- MEPA Reviews
- Smart Growth Principles
- Low Impact Development
- Economic Development
- Data & GIS

- Executive Order 418
- Grant Directory

Community Preservation Coalition - <http://www.communitypreservation.org/index.cfm>

Massachusetts Trial Court Law Libraries - <http://www.lawlib.state.ma.us/>

- Code of Massachusetts Regulations (CMR)
- Massachusetts General Law (MGL)

Metro Boston Common Data - <http://www.metrobostondatacommon.org/>

- Data on towns
- Maps

Others

National Do Not Call Registry - <https://www.donotcall.gov/default.aspx>

Newspapers:

- The Stow Independent - editor@stowindependent.com
- The Beacon-Villager - <http://www.wickedlocal.com/maynard/Beacon-villager@cnc.com>